

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 243, S. 1356, a bill to amend the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to strengthen the United States workforce development system through innovation in, and alignment and improvement of, employment, training, and education programs in the United States, and to promote individual and national economic growth, and for other purposes.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following my remarks and those of the Republican leader, the Senate will be in morning business until 5:30 this afternoon. At 5:30 the Senate will proceed to executive session. There will be at least 3 rollcall votes: Confirmation of the Patterson nomination, cloture on the Johnson nomination, and confirmation of the Johnson nomination.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. President, last week was difficult for the entire Senate community. When cooperation is lacking, as it was last week, completing the business before this body becomes much more difficult. Last week, though, the Senate confirmed four district court judges, two DC Circuit Court of Appeals judges, an Equal Employment Opportunity Commissioner, the Secretary of the Air Force, a Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board member, and a Deputy Secretary of State.

Although we accomplished a great deal, the process was neither easy nor pleasant. This week the Senate has just as much to achieve as it did last week. Without cooperation we will face another daunting vote schedule. But I am optimistic the same spirit of cooperation that made tonight's votes possible will last all week long.

Tonight the Senate will vote on Anne Patterson's nomination to be Assistant Secretary of State. We will also vote on cloture on the nomination of Jeh Johnson to be Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security. If cloture is invoked, this body will immediately vote on Johnson's confirmation.

As General Counsel of the Defense Department from 2009 to 2012, Mr. Johnson served as the senior lawyer for the largest government agency in the world. He oversaw the work of more than 10,000 military and civilian lawyers. Prior to his work at the Defense Department, Mr. Johnson served as Assistant U.S. Attorney and spent nearly 2 decades in private legal practice. He is eminently qualified, and we all look forward to his confirmation.

THE BUDGET

Tomorrow, the Senate will begin consideration of the budget measure passed by the House last week. Although neither side got everything it wanted from this agreement, the legislation should help break a terrible cycle of governing by crisis. It rolls back the painful and arbitrary cuts of the sequester, protects Social Security and Medicare benefits, and will help prevent another dangerous government shutdown in the new year.

On Wednesday, the Senate will turn to the Defense authorization measure,

crucial legislation that safeguards our Nation, ensures our troops have the resources and training they need, and provides for the military families who support our fighting men and women.

The Senate must also confirm Janet Yellen to head the Federal Reserve, Alejandro Mayorkas to be Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security, and John Koskinen to head the Internal Revenue Service. The nominations of Robert Wilkins to be a member of the DC Circuit Court of Appeals and Brian Davis of Florida to be a district court judge are also priorities for us. Mr. Davis' nomination has been pending for 2 years.

The Senate must also move quickly to confirm Sarah Sewall as Under Secretary of State, Jessica Wright to be Under Secretary for Readiness at the Defense Department, Sarah Bloom Raskin to be second in command at Treasury, and Mike Connor to be second in command at Interior, and Sloan Gibson to be deputy at the Veterans Affairs Department, and Rick Engler's nomination for the Chemical Safety Board.

Christmas is 1 week from Wednesday. We have a lot to do. We could complete all of our work by Thursday, by Friday, by Saturday, by Sunday, by Monday, or Tuesday, but finish it we must. I have outlined what we need to do. It is up to the minority to determine what, if anything, they are going to stop us from doing.

I am happy to work with them on time. But there are several items that I have indicated we have got to get done before Christmas.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HIRONO.) Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 5:30 p.m. with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I would suggest the absence of a quorum and ask unanimous consent that the time be equally divided for all quorum calls.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CARPER. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

JOHNSON NOMINATION

Mr. CARPER. I am proud to rise to speak in strong support of the nomination of Jeh Johnson to serve as the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security. As my colleagues know,

I have been concerned for many months about the high number of senior-level vacancies that exist at the Department. In fact, the Department of Homeland Security has been without a Senate-confirmed Deputy Secretary since April and without a Senate-confirmed Secretary since early September. That is simply too long for such critical positions to be vacant, especially since the Department of Homeland Security has been without Senate-confirmed leadership in a number of other senior leadership positions too.

That list of vacancies includes the position of Deputy Secretary, as well as the heads of Customs and Border Protection, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and the Inspector General.

Working with the President, we need to do something about it. Today we can. It is my hope and expectation that we will vote to confirm a new Secretary to lead the Department within the next few hours, allowing Jeh Johnson to be sworn in and start work later this week.

Getting a Secretary of Homeland Security quickly confirmed is essential to help effectively run this Department and protect the safety of our citizens. This Department is a large and complex entity with a diverse set of missions and challenges.

It is composed of 22 distinct agencies spread across various locations throughout the country. In the 10 years after its creation, the Department of Homeland Security still lacks a strong sense of cohesion.

Moreover, given the Nation's fiscal challenges, the Department, as many Federal agencies, is being asked to do more and get even better results with fewer Federal dollars.

That being said, over its 10 years, the Department has celebrated a number of important milestones. In fact, only last week, for the first time ever, the Department of Homeland Security received a clean financial audit.

There is one outlier among the major departments of our government that hasn't received that clean financial audit, and that is the Department of Defense, which has been around for approximately 70 years.

The Department of Homeland Security took 10 years and has been on the GAO high-risk list for all of those 10 years. I was delighted when I received word last week that this goal had been achieved. It is a major accomplishment and one for which I heartily congratulate the Department.

There is an old saying that goes something such as this: You can't manage what you can't measure.

Now the Department of Homeland Security achieved a clean financial audit. It is my hope that its financial management practices will continue to improve. In order to build upon this and other successes, I believe the Department needs Senate-confirmed leadership.